

Fighting in Laos, Cambodia Growing, Hill Report Warns

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Fighting in Laos and Cambodia is increasing in intensity under "deteriorating" conditions even if the war is winding down in South Vietnam, a Senate staff report warned yesterday.

Present U.S. policies offer "nothing but the prospect of more of the same, at higher cost," in these two nations while U.S. troops continue to be withdrawn from South Vietnam, the report said.

As a result, the United States is becoming heavily reliant on Thailand "as a base for continuing war" in Indochina. To try to save Laos from a Communist takeover, the United States is financing increasing numbers of Thai "irregulars" to fight in Laos, which has "circumvented" a legislative prohibition, it was stated.

While the United States "continues to encourage Thai involvement in the Indochina war," Thailand's uneasiness about U.S. overtures toward China is arousing questions in Thailand about "the wisdom of greater involvement" in the conflict.

These findings were included in the summation of a report made public yesterday by a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee headed by Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) The 94-page report itself still classified secret, is awaiting security clearance by the Nixon administration. It is entitled "Thailand, Laos and Cambodia — January, 1972," based on field studies by staff investigators James G. Lowenstein and Richard M. Moose.

"It has been very difficult to wring out the truth about just what we are doing there," said Symington in discussing the latest in a series of investigations on U.S. commitments in Indochina.

No figures appear in the published summary of the report, which was released after a review yesterday by members of the full committee.

The report questions the Executive Branch's compliance with the legislative restrictions the Senate has imposed on the level of warfare in Laos and Cambodia to forestall "another Vietnam," and the effectiveness of present U.S. policy.

News accounts have reported that 6,000 to 8,000 U.S.-financed Thai "irregulars," which critics call "mercenaries," are operating in Laos. The report again challenged the administration's definition of these troops as "local forces," exempt from legislative prohibitions on "third country" forces. The report also said that while U.S. forces and advisers have been kept out of Cambodia, as the law requires, it is "too soon" to determine if limits of \$350 million in U.S. aid for Laos this year, and \$341 million for Cambodia, "will be observed."

The summary said, in part:

"The military situation is currently worse in Laos than at any time since 1962, and worse than ever in Cambodia.

This is true despite the vast expenditures, despite the U.S. and South Vietnamese incursions into Cambodia, and despite the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos" last year.

In Laos and Cambodia, the investigators stated, they could find no plans other than "to continue to pursue the policies which thus far have served to intensify the de-

structive impact of the war, while failing to arrest the deteriorating military, political and economic situations in those two countries."

In Thailand, the report said, it is time to "put on a more candid basis" the real reasons for extensive military and economic aid, in place of the standard justification of combating the "insurgency" threat. The United States, the report said, has paid "a heavy indirect price" for making Thailand a principal base in Southeast Asia.

Sen Tom Del

U.S. Troop Buildup In Thailand Denied

BANGKOK (UPI) — The official spokesman for the U.S. embassy today denied a report by Senate investigators that there has been a heavy build-up of U.S. troop strength in Thailand as American Forces leave Vietnam.

In Mid-1969 there were about 49,000 U.S. servicemen in Thailand, the spokesman said, and reductions announced in late 1969 and early 1970 brought the total down to the present strength of about 32,000.

He said there have been no U.S. troop withdrawals since early 1970 and the report there was a buildup "is in error."

James G. Lowenstein and Richard M. Moose, investigators for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, recom-

mended legislation to put a ceiling on the number of American personnel in Thailand.

In a 96-page report to the committee, the two said Thailand was becoming the base for all U.S. operations in Southeast Asia and soon will have half as many American military personnel as there are in Vietnam.

The report is classified secret but Sen. Stuart Symington, D-Mo., furnished a brief summary to newsmen in Washington.

The Embassy spokesman declined comment except to give the withdrawal figures which were announced jointly by the U.S. and Thai governments at the times the reductions were completed almost two years ago.